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(California Oil Fields) [15 original photographs of Tupman Lease oil derricks and oil facilities at Taft, Kern County, California]

Stock#: 94701
Map Maker: Anonymous
Date: 1921 circa
Place: [Taft, California]
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 5.5 x 3.5 inches
Price: \$ 1,200.00



Description:

Photographs of Kern County Oil Fields

A group of evocative photographs illustrating oil derricks and related structures in Taft, California, near Bakersfield.

Taft, a town in Kern County, southwest of Bakersfield, owes its existence to oil production. At the time of these photographs (1921) Standard Oil was in the process of acquiring land from Hamer Irwin Tupman (1868-1952), who owned the original oil leases at Taft. Tupman, a native of Kentucky, had come to Bakersfield in 1892, founded the town of Tupman, just north of Taft, and by the early 1920s was serving as a Kern County supervisor. It is likely the present photographs were made as part of an oil promotion that might be related to Standard Oil's acquisition. In later years Taft would grow into a virtual company town, with Standard Oil (and its later iteration Chevron) employing most of the town's inhabitants in oil-related jobs.

Two of the images bear dated handwritten captions:

- *Starting a New Rig, Tupman Lease, 1/23/21*
- *Tupman Lease, Taft, Calif, 1/23/21*

Other images show freshly built offices or homes, and recently planted trees, on an otherwise stark desert-like landscape.

Standard Oil and Kern County Oil Fields



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These images reflect the nascent consolidation of Southern California's oil fields in the early 20th-century, as companies such as Standard Oil began to dominate the industry. The towering oil derricks, freshly constructed buildings, and even newly planted trees, are all captured in the present photographs, epitomizing the corporatization of the Southern California oil industry.

The photographs evoke the aftermath of the relentless oil-greed depicted in Paul Thomas Anderson's epic film, *There Will Be Blood*, which was inspired by Upton Sinclair's novel *Oil!*, which itself was based on the life of Edward L. Doheny. In May 1899 Doheny, already a veteran oil man, bought up land surrounding the initial Kern River strike discovered by Jonathan Elwood. By the early 1920s big corporations largely pushed the independent oil man aside.

Rarity

Such original photographs of early 20th-century Southern California oil production are quite scarce in the market.

Detailed Condition:

15 original silver gelatin photograph prints. 5 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches. All clear images. Overall condition is very good.